

NOVEMBER 1988

RANDOM NOTES

The Drought is Over!

The long drought of software and hardware for the Atari 8-bits has finally ended! Several new products and developments from both old and new sources are either now available, or should be by the first quarter of 1989. "Yeah," you say, "we've heard that all before and we don't believe it now!" Now, what kind of an attitude is that for a faithful Atari fanatic to take? Cynicism is an ill-fitting garment.

Most of the developments in software are coming from users and small independent software publishers. Most well known is the recent upsurge in so-called "shareware." This is software which you usually can get for free, or for only a few dollars, and then, if you like it, send in a requested "registration fee" to the author. These fees are very reasonable and will usually get the registered user complete documentation and one or two free upgrades. The most frequent sources for shareware is on a BBS or in a user group library, although many computer software stores also carry a selection. Well known recent shareware titles include Keith Ledbetter's EXPRESS! terminal programs and Roy Goldman's DAISY-DOT programs. These, and most other shareware releases are as good as and frequently surpass the quality and usefulness of regular commercial software releases.

Some of the most exciting new software is of the more purely commercial variety and comes from mainly well-known companies. From Reeves Software comes DIAMOND, a replacement OS for the XL/XE series. This program is a GEOS-like operating environment designed to make the 8-bits operate much like the ST does, although much simpler, of course. Also available from Reeves is DIAMOND PAINT, DIAMOND WRITE, and other programs which use the DIAMOND environment. Sounds pretty good to me. Unfortunately, the ST Jr. program from Merrill-Ward has been cancelled due to developer problems between Merrill-Ward and the program authors. Merrill-Ward is

instead working with Reeves Software on DIAMOND. The program is now in final beta testing and is promised to be shipped by Christmas. Preliminary reviews say that DIAMOND is a true gem of a program (pun intended).

Atari promises several more game cartridges for the XE Game System (these also work with 64K XL/XE series models and some also work on the 48K 400/800 series). The company has also signed with AXLON for codevelopment of at least a dozen games "for the Atari." It is assumed that there will be both 8-bit and ST games developed although this is not definite. What is interesting about this is that AXLON is headed by none other than Nolan Bushnell - founder of Atari!

One new software title which really interests me is the simultaneous release for both the 8-bit and ST of the game version of Tom Clancy's great novel, "The Hunt for Red October." If you, like me, are a fan of Mr. Clancy's books, then we both have something to be excited about. I have seen this game in a release for another computer which is similar to the ST and it was a real wow! If the Atari versions are as good then "The Hunt for Red October" will be a classic on the order of "LodeRunner" and "Chop Lifter." I can hardly wait!

I've saved the best for last. One of the most exciting hardware announcements in many moons promises a resurgence in hardware hacking. Are you ready for this? DataQue, the developers of MTOS, has announced the development and approval by Atari(!) of an internal circuit modification for the 800XL, 65XE, and 130XE models WHICH CHANGES THEM INTO TRUE 16-BIT COMPUTERS! This mod, called the TURBO 16, is a five chip board which plugs into the 6502 socket and replaces it with a 65C18 microprocessor chip, the same chip used in the Apple IIGS. This is supposed to run virtually all regular 8-bit software and also new 16-bit software. This will make the 8-bits into sort of a mini ST with the ability to use up to 4 MEG of internal RAM (and up to 16 MEG with external

NOVEMBER MEETING: NOV. 8 AT 7PM
AV CONFERENCE ROOM - SALEM PUBLIC LIBRARY

adapters), much faster I/O, a more powerful OS, and, with increased RAM, much higher graphics resolutions. Atari has approved the code to be used but will not support it since they wouldn't want to have the 8-bits compete with the ST models. This all sounds almost too good to be true but it does look like this time it's for real. It is to be available by the first of the year at a retail price of \$100! Yours truly will be getting one as soon as he can find one. Wouldn't that make one heck of a demonstration?

It feels really good to be able to relate positive news for a change. Here's hoping it was good for you too.

Further details on the TURBO 16 can be found in the November issue of Computer Shopper Magazine.

COMPUTER SYNDROME

Reprinted from the LONDON DAILY TIMES

Written by Julian Isherwood

Warning to computer freaks: excessive preoccupation with your machine can reveal a dormant psychosis, report doctors in Denmark's Weekly Journal for Doctors.

One Danish 18-year-old was so absorbed that he neglected his friends and spent 12 to 16 hours a day at his home computer. "He merged with it," say psychiatrists Eva Jensen and Erik Simonsen and psychologist Bent Brok. He began to think in computer-programming language, suffered from insomnia and anxiety and finally was unable to distinguish between his programs and the real world. He had to be hospitalized and treated for psychotic illness.

The computer trade itself recognizes the problem. Lars Knudsen, director of a high-technology information agency, estimates there are 5,000 computer freaks in Denmark. Typically, they are between the ages 12 and 18, and 95 percent of them are boys. They sleep into the afternoon and then sit in front of the screen until four in the morning. As their preoccupation grows, the always rational computer becomes a substitute for human contact.

FROM THE KEYBOARD OF DAVE TAYLOR

Well, this is my second month as editor of the newsletter. But that is not to say that Dan Johnson has not played a major roll in the publication of this one as well as the last one. He still writes articles and is kind enough to have copies of the newsletter made. Once again, he deserves A LOT of thanx!! As for me, I am getting better at working the program that makes the newsletter so it is getting easier each month. But one thing that bugs me, though is that what good is it to do a newsletter if nobody shows up at the meeting? I admit, I was guilty of this crime last month, but I still managed to get the newsletter done. I remember at the last meeting I attended, Dan was telling me that HACK once boasted a membership of over 100 people. WHAT HAPPENED?!!! Where did everybody go? Hopefully, since Atari is beginning to put more support on the American market, it will have a positive effect on the attendance to HACK meetings. In order to replenish the membership (and the budget) of the club, we have to do three things:

1- Make HACK's presence known! Spread the word about HACK as much as you possibly can. The more members we have, the more money we have. The more money we have, the more we can do for the club as a whole. Word of mouth will play an essential roll in HACK's resurrection.

2- Find out who owns an Atari and is not a member of the club. (This might prove to be difficult, but it's possible.) All it takes is a couple of calls to some BBS's and a bit of looking around in the BBS's. And for the ones without modems, we can put an ad in the paper or something to make them aware of HACK's presence.

3- Give them a reason for wanting to be a member of HACK. Let them know that by being a member of HACK, they can find out information on just about anything having to do with the Atari

world. Thus, it would be easier for them to decide whether they should buy a hardware/software product, or not. They will find out what products are best for their needs and wants. Also, some current members of the club are very knowledgeable about Atari computers. So if another member wanted to know some information about his computer. He would be able to get that information.

Hopefully our membership will increase. But it won't just happen by itself. We all have to help to make it happen. So if you know an Atari user who isn't a member of HACK, convince him or her to become a member or at least attend a meeting. See ya' next month!



LISTER PLUS 1.5 AND PICTURE PLUS 3.0 A Brief Review by Dan Johnson

If you are looking for a good program to use for printing out your picture files then look no further than PICTURE PLUS. This excellent program from ANTIC SOFTWARE allows you more options for printing out your graphic screens than almost any program I know about. PICTURE PLUS allows pictures to be printed out in different sizes and in your choice of densities; draft and double-pass graphics are both supported. It allows your picture to be manipulated, inverted, inversed, the colors changed, intensity and contrast reduced or increased, text to be added or removed, and lots more. It can be used with Epson and NEC 9-pin printers. Using the built-in printer driver creator you can configure the program to your particular printer; be sure to

bring your printer manual. Documentation is short but concise. The program supports the extra memory of the 130XE and expanded XL and XE models. It's a BASIC program and it shows. If PICTURE PLUS has a failing it's in its speed. However, it is adequate for all but heavy usage. PICTURE PLUS may be the best single program available for dumping graphics pictures to your printer.

LISTER PLUS is similar to PICTURE PLUS. They both have the same user interface and are equally easy to use. LISTER PLUS is capable of printing graphics dumps, as long as full-page size is okay. It's main reason for being is to allow you to get near letter quality (NLQ) printouts of text files and program listings. This program is very much like DAISY-DOT or DOT MAGIC. It has, like DOT MAGIC, a typewriter mode which is very useful for creating labels. However, DOT MAGIC is more versatile in that it can use DAISY-DOT fonts, of which there are literally dozens available. Still, LISTER PLUS does what it is designed to do very well. Its printouts look great and its fonts are a little smoother than most of DAISY-DOT's. One particularly good looking font is the one called TEXTBOOK; very professional looking.

I found PICTURE PLUS and LISTER PLUS to be very good and intelligently programmed utilities. They worked as advertised and seem to be well-debugged. I do, however, recommend that you look at BILL BOARD and DOT-MAGIC. They are quite similar and are available for the price of a HACK library disk. If that is not to your liking, the combination of PICTURE and LISTER PLUS is awfully hard to beat. On the 10 point scale I rate them both a solid 8.

PICTURE PLUS and LISTER PLUS are sold together for \$19.95 plus shipping. Order from Antic Software, #ML8A, 544 Second Street, San Francisco, CA 94017. Or call 1-800-234-7001 for credit card orders. Ask for product number AP0179.

ATARI CX-24 JOYSTICK
For the ST and 8-Bit

My children have an affinity for destroying joysticks. As a consequence we have gone through virtually every joystick available for the Atari under \$25. We have found a few good ones and lots of poor ones. I'll confess to exxageration on my earlier statement for I've really only tried those few models which can be used by a leftie and a rightie. Those sticks are few but seem to be getting more popular. The Atari CX-24 is one of those ambidextrous models.

If you have seen the Atari 7800 Game System then you have seen the CX-24 joystick as it's standard equipment. It uses the same bubble-switch arrangement as the original Atari joystick, the infamous "wrist buster" that came with the 2600. This is a fine system and one that is very easy to repair should a switch go out. Unlike the original joystick, however, the CX-24 is a pleasure to use. It fits into either hand quite easily since it is only about 2.5 inches wide and 5 inches long. The handle is a steel shaft covered with black plastic with a flat-topped round knob at the end. Action is smooth, positive, and light; no more aching wrists from using an Atari stick! The cord is 4 feet long and of much heavier construction than on the original stick. The topper is that it has two fire buttons, side-mounted neat the front of the case. They work equally well in left and right-handed operation.

This joystick seems quite rugged. It's compact size and good looks make it painless to leave it plugged in as it takes up little desk space and doesn't look like it belongs in a helicopter. This is a good joystick and I heartily recommend it to all left-handed gamers and righties, too. At \$20 this stick would be a good buy - at \$9 it's a steal. On the 10 point scale the CX-24 rates a 9 for its solid construction, good looks, and pleasant feel. It's not the best joystick made but its probably the best overall

value. What more could you ask for?

You can get the CX-24 for \$9 plus shipping from: **BEST ELECTRONICS**, 2021 The Alameda, Suite 290, San Jose, CA 95126. Or call 1-408-243-6950.

ARTICLES WANTED!!

HACK desperately needs articles on the Atari ST computers. All aspects relating to the operation of the ST are of interest. If you would like to submit an article please contact **DAN JOHNSON** at 585-8793 or **Dave Taylor** at 399-9861 after 6pm. All articles will be published.

HACK STAFF:

Editors.....**Dave Taylor**
Dan Johnson
ST Coordinator ...**Jerry Issac**
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LOCAL BBS NUMBERS:

Popcorn School BBS: **585-9595**
Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays
7:00pm to 12:00am
SysOp: **Dick Dery**

Cinderella BBS: **399-9861**
Fridays & Saturdays: 7:00pm to 12:00am
Sundays: 4:00pm to 9:00pm

Salem Public Library BBS: **588-6130**
588-6081
24 hours a day, 7 days a week!!

Beilke's BBS: **588-1891**
24 hours a day, 7 days a week!!

Renegade One: **390-3811**